



Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Member Organizations

*The Umbrella Center for
Domestic Violence Services
Ansonia, CT*

*The Center for Family Justice
Bridgeport, CT*

*Women's Center
Danbury, CT*

*Domestic Violence Program
United Services
Dayville, CT*

*Network Against Domestic
Abuse
Enfield, CT*

*Domestic Abuse Services
Greenwich YWCA
Greenwich, CT*

*Interval House
Hartford, CT*

*Meriden-Wallingford Chrysalis
Meriden, CT*

*New Horizons
Middletown, CT*

*Prudence Crandall Center
New Britain, CT*

*The Umbrella Center for
Domestic Violence Services
New Haven, CT*

*Safe Futures
New London, CT*

*Domestic Violence Crisis Center
Norwalk, CT*

*Women's Support Services
Sharon, CT*

*Domestic Violence Crisis Center
Stamford, CT*

*Susan B. Anthony Project
Torrington, CT*

*Safe Haven
Waterbury, CT*

*Domestic Violence Program
United Services
Willimantic, CT*

Written Testimony in Support of

HB 6465, AAC Purchase of Service Contracts

Human Services Committee

February 10, 2015

Good morning Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie and members of the committee. CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV) is the state's leading voice for victims of domestic violence and our 18 member organizations that serve them. Our members provide essential services to nearly 50,000 victims of domestic violence each year. Services provided include 24-hour crisis response, emergency shelter, safety planning, counseling, support groups and court advocacy.

We urge your support of HB 6465.

This bill asks the Governor and legislators to appropriately fund nonprofit providers by including an increase, commonly referred to as a cost of living adjustment, in all future Purchase of Service (POS) contracts and Medicaid fee-for service accounts consistent with the average annual growth of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) or inflation. This increase in funding is necessary because the state has failed to adequately fund nonprofit providers for the last two decades forcing many nonprofits to close, compete against one another for scarce resources, layoff employees, reduce benefit packages; altogether creating a system that weakens the entire nonprofit sector and threatens its sustainability.

In fiscal year 2014 (7/1/13 - 6/30/14), CCADV's 18 member domestic violence organizations served nearly 50,000 victims of domestic violence. This includes over 1,700 adults and children who stayed in our shelters and safe homes because they were in serious physical danger and had no other safe options. In order to accommodate the need for safe shelter, many domestic violence organizations double typical room capacity with the use of cots or ask victims to sleep on couches when absolutely necessary to keep them safe. In other instances when all shelter space is full, victims will be placed in local hotels – a temporary and unsafe option.

It's also important to consider that victims are more often presenting to domestic violence organizations with a number of complex needs, the violence they are fleeing only being one of them. The presence of abuse in a relationship can result in severe emotional and psychological trauma for victims. Underlying or untreated mental health issues may be worsened and victims may self-medicate as a way of coping. Abused women often report that, in addition to medicating the emotional and physical pain of trauma, chemical use helped to reduce or eliminate their feelings of fear and became part of their day-to-day safety strategies.

Achieving sustainable safety, financial security, and emotional well-being for themselves and their children are always the goals. The community services provided by our member organizations make it possible. These services, provided over 109,000 times throughout the fiscal year 2014, include counseling, safety planning, support groups, court advocacy, information & referrals, transportation, housing advocacy, basic needs, parenting support and activity groups for teens and youth.

Our shelters are staffed 24 hours per day, 7 days per week by individuals dedicated to empowering victims to overcome their abusive relationships. But, like any human

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service provided by nonprofits to people in need, these services require funding that is reflective of the actual, present-day cost to provide that service – reflective of industry wages, the cost of health insurance, the cost of food and fuel, the cost of utilities, etc.

This legislation makes a commitment to address those issues by properly investing in the nonprofit sector, a commitment the state has already made through 1,585 POS contracts serving approximately 500,000 residents (15% of the population) among ten state agencies totaling \$1.38 billion or 7.3% of the state budget. While any increase in funding may seem impossible in these tough budget years, policymakers simply can't afford not to do this. Our employees are some of the hardest working professionals across the state and have had to bear the burden of underfunding, going years without salary increases while simultaneously watching benefit packages deteriorate.

Supporting this bill will provide an opportunity to improve the quality of life and economic activity in our communities and for your constituents. Investing in nonprofit providers will strengthen service delivery, increase economic activity, and save taxpayer money. This bill is a "win-win" for the economy, the nonprofit workforce, and those we serve with cost-effective, high-quality and efficient services. I ask for your commitment now to require that future nonprofit-government contracts are tied to the growth in CPI and/or inflation to ensure adequate funding of contracted services.

Thank you for your consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact me with questions.

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